Commonwealth of Kentucky
Energy and Environment Cabinet

Steven L. Beshear, Governor **Leonard K. Peters, Secretary**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE **CONTACT: Clark Dorman, 502-564-3410**

Public Advised of Potential Health Risks with Exposure to Water in Taylorsville Lake

Harmful algal bloom detected

FRANKFORT, Ky. (June 27, 2013) – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Louisville District has identified an algal bloom (HAB) in Taylorsville Lake in Spencer County that can be harmful to people and animals. The levels of the harmful algae are occurring at the threshold where health effects may be observed. Federal and state health officials are advising the public of potential health risks associated with swimming in or ingesting the lake water and using the lake for watering pets or livestock.

The Kentucky Division of Water (DOW) is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Kentucky Department for Fish and Wildlife (KDFW), the Kentucky Department for Public Health and the Kentucky Department of Parks to monitor Taylorsville Lake for the harmful bacteria and inform the public on the lake's status.

"Harmful algal blooms are not typical algal blooms," said Clark Dorman, manager of the DOW Water Quality Branch. "HABs are a form of cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, that produce toxins that can cause nose and skin irritation and other illnesses in humans and animals. Right now, the levels of the cyanobacteria in the lake are at a level where health effects may occur with exposure to affected lake waters. Therefore we are advising the public of the health risks associated with using the lake. As the summer progresses, we will continue to track these levels and advise the public appropriately."

The more typical green algae, which is not harmful to humans or animals, come in many forms and may look like underwater moss, stringy mats or floating scum.

Cyanobacteria, on the other hand, looks like slicks of opaque, bright-green paint, but closer inspection often reveals the grainy, sawdust-like appearance of individual colonies of bacteria. The color of the algae may also appear as red or brown.

Symptoms of HAB exposure may include gastrointestinal symptoms such as stomach pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea; skin and eye irritation, and/or throat irritation or breathing difficulties. If you are concerned that you have symptoms that are a result of exposure to HABs, please see your doctor and call your local health department.

The following guidelines are recommended to avoid exposure to HABs:

- Direct contact with affected water, including swimming, wading, fishing, paddling, diving and water skiing may result in symptoms. It is advisable to avoid contact with water that has unusual color or where blue-green bacteria have been identified, even if the water appears to be clear.
- People who are prone to respiratory allergies or asthma should avoid areas with harmful algal blooms. Children may be particularly sensitive.
- If contact has been made with water containing blue-green algae, wash off with fresh water. In some cases, skin irritation will appear after prolonged exposure. If symptoms persist, consult your local health care provider.
- Fish fillets (not organs) may be consumed after the fillets have been rinsed in clean, non-lake water. Also wash any parts of your body that have come into contact with the fish.

Some factors that can contribute to HABs include sunlight, low water conditions, warmer temperatures and excess nutrients (phosphorus or nitrogen).
DOW, KDFW and USACE will continue to monitor the lake throughout the summer and keep the public informed of the lake's status.

The 3,050-acreTaylorsville Lake was constructed on the Salt River by USACE during the 1970s and '80s to prevent flood damage and provide recreational opportunities. The lake is not used as a source for public drinking water.

For current information about HABs and monitoring at Taylorsville Lake, visit the USACE Louisville District website at http://www.lrl.usace.army.mil/Missions/CivilWorks/WaterInformation/HABs.aspx.

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